THE
RICHEST TREASURE

By Imam Ali
A Selection from
"Nahjul Balagha"

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ALSO

MY DEAR SON
A LETTER FROM FATHER TO SON

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INTRODUCTION

It is very difficult to introduce a man like Imam Ali (a.s.) in this short biography. Many people have written about his life and character. None of these are sufficient to introduce such a great man. Perhaps the best way to know him is to refer to the sayings of our beloved Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h), or to study the history of Islam or to read his book "Nahjul Balagha" from which this book is selected.

The life of Imam Ali (a.s.), can be divided into three periods. For the first 23 years of his life he struggled with the Prophet (p.b.u.h) for the propagation of Islam and establishment of an Islamic government. The second period, about 25 years after the passing away of the Prophet, he remained silent to preserve the unity of the Islamic Ummat trying to establish Islamic justice. Unlike many revolutionaries who fight for justice and endanger their lives just to obtain leadership, and then become conservative, Imam Ali (a.s.) remained a revolutionary throughout his life.

Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h) once said, " I am the city of knowledge and Ali is its gate." Dr. George Gordagh in his book, " Ali, the Voice of Human Justice" says, "O, mother nature, it would have been wonderful of you if you would have employed all your powers and potentials to once again give birth to a great man, a genius and a hero such as Imam Ali."

Dr. Ali Shariati, a contemporary Muslim writer speaks of Imam Ali (a.s.) as follows:

"Ali was one spirit with many potentials."
He was the best in speech, on the pulpit.
He was the best in worship, at the altar.
He was the best of workers, in the farm.
He was the best in fighting, in the battlefield.
He was the best in being faithful, with Muhammad.
He had the highest feeling of responsibility, in society.
He had the best of writing, in *Nahjul Balagha.*
He was the most pious, in life.
He was the most knowledgeable, in Islam.
He was the father of revolution, in time.
He was the example of justice, in government.
He was the best father and teacher of humanity, at home and…
He was the best obedient of God, always and everywhere."

Imam Ali (a.s.) was born 30 years after the Holy Prophet's birth. His father, Abu Talib, was the Prophet's uncle and his mother was Fatima binte Asad.

Abu Talib raised the Prophet after the death of his parents and grandfather, Abdul Muttalib. The Prophet cared for and loved Ali as a son. He grew up in an atmosphere of virtue and piety, which no other home could provide. This early training left a lasting effect on Ali's mind. It gave him a keen vision and passionate love for truth. Above all, it made him a fearless fighter in the way of Allah. These qualities were later to prove a rare asset for Islam. He was the first youth to join the fold of Islam. He was only 9 years old when the Prophet (p.b.u.h) was called

to the divine mission. Accepting Islam at an early age was a rare act of independent judgment for a boy, especially in a society where idol worship prevailed. Ali grew up under the loving care of Prophet (p.b.u.h). This gave him a deep insight into the basic realities of life and faith. The night the Holy Prophet left for Medina his house was surrounded by bloodthirsty men who were ready to kill him. The Holy Prophet asked Ali to lie on his bed and he himself left unnoticed. Ali gladly accepted this invitation and slept calmly the whole night. He was happy that he helped save the Prophet's life.

Ali had a very close blood tie with the Holy Prophet but the Prophet wanted to bring him closer still. He gave his only daughter, Fatima, to him in marriage. Ali realized the honor that was done to him; he married no other wife as long as Fatima lived. Hasan and Husain were the sons of Ali and Fatima. The Holy Prophet loved them like his own sons. Ali actively took part in all the Islamic battles, side by side with the Holy Prophet, Muhammad (p.b.u.h), except in the battle of Tabuk where the Holy Prophet decided to leave Ali in charge of Medina during his absence. This gave the hypocrites an opportunity to talk ill of Ali. When the Prophet heard this he said, "O Ali, do you not like that we have the same relationship as Aaron with Moses?" The Prophet's words silenced the hypocrites. During his last illness, Ali was constantly by the Prophet's bed. When the Holy Prophet passed away, it was Ali, assisted by his uncle, Abbas, who performed the last rites. Ali was one of the scribes of the revelations. Letters sent out by the Prophet were also written by him. The three caliphs before Ali depended much on Ali's advice. Ali was killed in the Jami mosque of Kufa at the age of 63. Ibn Muljim hit him with a poisoned sword while he was praying. Ali's wound was serious and he called upon his sons and gave advice, "Oh my sons, always be truthful, be merciful and helpful to people. Try to slay the oppressor and help the oppressed."

Ali was undoubtedly one of the greatest sons of Islam and the closest companion of the Prophet. His understanding of the Qu'ran was very deep. He was a symbol of the great Islamic tradition of combining political power with self-imposed want and selfless service. Ali was the last representative of the ultra-democratic spirit and the last of the pious caliphs.

THE RICHEST TREASURE

Hazrat Ali's famous letter to Malik-e-Ashtar
Governor of Egypt

INTRODUCTION

The following instructions in the form of a letter were written by Hazrat Ali (a.s.) to Malik-e-Ashtar whom he had appointed as governor of Egypt in the year 657 A.D. (approximately). There is a main central idea running throughout these instructions, like one single thread out of which a cloth is woven, and that is of Allah. The government is of Allah, the governors and the governed are both creatures of Allah.

This letter is based on the principles of administration as taught by the Holy Quran; a code to establish a kind and benevolent rule, throwing light on various aspects of justice, benevolence and mercy; an order based on the ethics of a benign and pious rulership, where justice and mercy is shown to human beings irrespective of class, creed and color, where poverty is neither a stigma nor a disqualification and where justice is not tarred with nepotism, favoritism, provincialism or religion fanaticism; and on the other hand it is a thesis on the higher values of morality.

It explains what a human administration should be and how it is to be carried out, and it justifies the claims of Muslims that Islam wants to introduce a godly administration of the people, for the people, and by the people, and it wants that ruler should not rule to please himself, but to bring happiness to the ruled, and no religion before Islam tried to achieve this end. Ali should be congratulated for having introduced these principles in his government and for having written them down for posterity.

According to historian Masudi (*Murooj-uz-Zahab,* Masudi Vol. 11, page 33, Egypt), Hazrat Ali is credited with not less than 480 treatises, lectures and epistles on a variety of subjects dealing with philosophy, religion, law and politics, as collected by Zaid Ibn Wahab in the Imam's own lifetime. So highly valued are these contributions both for their intrinsic literary worth that some of his masterpieces have formed, throughout the course of Islamic history, subject of study in centers of Muslim learning. Indeed, his reputation seems to have traveled into Europe at the time of the renaissance. Edward Powcock, (1604-1691) a professor at the University of Oxford published the first English translation of his 'Sayings' and delivered in 1639 a series of lectures on his 'Rhetoric'.

This letter according to *Fehrist-i-Tusi* (page 23) was first copied in the time of Hazrat Ali (a.s.) by Asbagh bin Nubata and later on reproduced and referred to in their writings by various Arab and Egyptian scholars, chief of them being Nasr Ibn Mazahim (148 A.H.), Syed Razi (404 A.H.), Ibn-I-Abil Hadid (655 A.H.), Ibn-I-Abdullah the reformer of Egypt, Allamah Mustafa Bek Najib, the great scholar of Egypt. The last named regards this letter "as a basic guide in Islamic administration."

"But for his assassination", to quote the language of a French historian, "the Moslem world might have witnessed the realization of the Prophet's teachings, in the actual amalgamation of

Reason with Law, and in the impersonation of the first principles of true philosophy in positive action." The same passionate devotion to knowledge and learning which distinguished Muhammad, breathed in every word of his Disciple. With a liberality of mind far beyond that of his age in which he lived was joined with a sincere devoutness of spirit and earnestness of faith. His sermons faithfully preserved by one of his descendants and his litanies or psalms, portray a devout uplooking towards the source of All Good, and an unbounded faith in humanity.

THE RICHEST TREASURE

In the name of Allah the Beneficent the Merciful

Be it known to you, O Malik, that I am sending you as Governor to a country, which in the past has experienced both just and unjust rule. Men will scrutinize your actions with a searching eye, even as you need to scrutinize the actions of those before you, and speak of you even as you did speak of them. The fact is that the public speaks well of only those who do good. It is they who furnish the proof of your actions. Hence the richest treasure that you may covet should be the treasure of good deeds. Keep your desires under control and deny yourself that which you have been prohibited, for by such abstinence alone you will be able to distinguish between what is good and what is not.

Develop in your heart the feeling of love for your people and let it be the source of kindliness and blessing to them. Do not behave with them like a barbarian, and do not appropriate to yourself that which belongs to them. Remember that the citizens of the state are of two categories. They are subject to infirmities and liable to commit mistakes. Some indeed do commit mistakes. But forgive them even as you would like God to forgive you. Bear in mind that you are placed over them, even as I am placed over you. And then there is God even above him who has given you the position of governor in order that you may look after those under you and to be sufficient unto them. And remember you will be judged by what you do for them.

Do not set yourself against God, for neither do you possess the strength to shield yourself against His displeasure, nor can you place yourself outside the pale of His mercy and forgiveness. Do not feel sorry over any act of forgiveness, nor rejoice over any punishment that you may mete out to any one. Do not rouse yourself to anger, for no good will come out of it.

Do not say: "I am your overlord and dictator, and that you should, therefore, bow to my commands," as that will corrupt your heart, weaken your faith in religion and create disorder in the state. Should you be elated by power, or feel in your mind the slightest symptoms of pride and arrogance, then look at the power and majesty of the divine governance of the Universe over which you have absolutely no control. It will restore the sense of calmness and affability. Beware! Never put yourself against the majesty and grandeur of God and never imitate His omnipotence; for God has brought low every rebel of God and every tyrant of man.

Let your mind respect through your actions the rights of God and the rights of man, and likewise, persuade your companions and relations to do the same. For, otherwise, you will be doing injustice to yourself and to humanity. Thus both man and God will become your enemies. There is no hearing anywhere for one at war with God until he repents and seeks forgiveness. Nothing deprives man of divine blessings or excites divine wrath against him

more easily than oppression. Hence it is, that God listens to the voice of the oppressed and waylays the oppressor.

THE COMMON MAN

Maintain justice in administration and impose it on your own self and seek the consent of the people, for the discontent of the masses sterilizes the contentment of the privileged few and the discontent of the few loses itself in the contentment of the many. Remember, the privileged few will not rally round you in moments of difficulty: they will try to side-track justice, they will ask for more than what they deserve and will show no gratitude for favors done to them. They will feel restive in the face of trials and will offer no regret for their shortcomings. It is the common man who is the strength of the state and of religion. It is he who fights the enemy. So live in close contact with the masses and be mindful of their welfare.

Keep at a distance he who exposes the weakness of others. After all, the masses are not free from weaknesses. It is the duty of the ruler to shield them. Do not bring to light that which is hidden, but try to remove those weaknesses, which have been brought to light. God is watchful of everything that is hidden from you, and He alone will deal with it. Cover up the faults of the public to the best of your ability and God will not disclose your faults to the public gaze. Unloose the tangle of mutual hatred between the public and the administration and remove all those causes, which may give rise to strained relations between them. Protect yourself from every such act as may not be quite correct for you. Do not make haste in seeking confirmation of tale telling, for the taleteller is a deceitful person appearing in the garb of a friend.

THE COUNSELORS

Never take counsel of a miser, for, he will vitiate your magnanimity and frighten you of poverty. Do not take counsel of a coward also for he will weaken your resolutions. Do not take counsel of the greedy too, for he will instill greed in you and turn you into a tyrant. Miserliness, cowardliness and greed deprive man of his trust in God.

The worst counselor is he who has served as a counselor to unjust rulers and shared their crimes. So, never let men who have been companions of tyrants or shared their crimes be your counselors. You can get better men then these, men gifted with intelligence and foresight, but unpolluted by sin, men who have never aided a tyrant in his tyranny or a criminal in his crime. Such men will never be a burden to you. On the other hand, they will be a source of help and strength to you at all times. They will be friends to you and strangers to your enemies. Choose such men alone for companionship both in private and in public. Even among these, show preference for those who have a habitual regard for truth however trying to you at times their truth may prove to be, and who offer you no encouragement in the display of tendencies, which God does not like His friends to develop.

Keep close to you the upright and the God-fearing and make clear to them that they are never to flatter you and never to give you credit for any good that you may not have done: for, the tolerance of flattery and unhealthy praise stimulates pride in man and makes him arrogant.

Do not treat the good and bad alike. That will deter the good from doing, and encourage the bad in their bad pursuits. Recompense everyone according to what they deserve. Remember that mutual trust and good will between the ruler and the ruled are bred only through benevolence, justice and service. So, cultivate goodwill amongst the people; for, their goodwill alone will save you from troubles. Your benevolence to them will be repaid by their trust in you, and your ill-treatment by their ill will.

Do not disregard the noble traditions set by our forbearers, which have promoted harmony and progress among the people; and do not initiate any thing which might minimize their usefulness. The men who had established those noble traditions have had their reward; but responsibility will be yours if they are discarded. Try always to learn something from the experience of the learned and the wise, and frequently consult them in state matters so that you might maintain the peace and goodwill, which your predecessors had established in the land.

THE DIFFERENT CLASSES OF PEOPLE

Remember that the people are composed of different classes. The progress of one is dependent on the progress of every other; and none can afford to be independent of the other. We have the army formed of the soldiers of God, we have our civil officers and their establishments, our judiciary, our revenue collectors and our public officers. The general public itself consist of Muslims and Zimmis and among them are merchants and craftsmen, the unemployed and the indigent. God has prescribed for them their several rights, duties and obligations. They are defined and preserved in the Book of God and in the traditions of His Prophet.

The army, by the grace of God, is like a fortress to the people and lends dignity to the state. It upholds the prestige of the Faith and maintains the peace of the country. Without it the state cannot stand. In its turn, it cannot stand without the support of the state. Our soldiers have proved strong before the enemy because of the privilege God has given them to fight for Him; but they have their material needs to fulfill and have therefore to depend upon the income provided for them from the state revenue. The military and the civil population who pay revenue, both need the co-operation of others-the judiciary, civil officers and their establishment. The Qazi administers civil and criminal law; the civil officers collect revenue and attend to civil administration with the assistance of their establishment. And then there is the class of the poor and needy, whose maintenance is an obligation on the other classes. God has given appropriate opportunity of service to one and all; and then there are the rights of all these classes over the administration which the administrator has to meet with an eye to the good of the entire population, a duty which he cannot fulfill properly unless he takes personal interest in its execution and seeks help from God. Indeed, it is obligatory on him to impose this duty on himself, and to bear with patience the inconveniences and difficulties incidental to his task.

THE ARMY

Be particularly mindful of the welfare of those in the army who in your opinion, are staunchly faithful to their God and Prophet and loyal to their chief, and who in the hour of passion can

restrain themselves and listen coolly to sensible remonstrance, and who can succor the weak and smite the strong, whom violent provocation will not throw into violent temper and who will not falter at any stage.

Keep yourself in close contact with families of established reputation and integrity and with a glorious past, and draw to yourself men brave and upright in character, generous and benevolent in disposition; for such are the select of the society.

Care for them with the tenderness with which you care for your children, and do not talk before them of any good that you might have done to them, nor disregard any expression of affection, which they show in return; for, such conduct inspires loyalty, devotion and goodwill. Attend to every little want of theirs not resting content with what general help that you might have given to them, for sometimes, timely attention to a little want of theirs brings them immense relief. Surely these people will not forget you in your own hour of need.

It behooves you to select for your commander-in-chief one who imposes on himself, as a duty, the task of rendering help to his men, and who can excel in kindness every other officer who has to attend to the needs of the men under him, and look after their families when they are away from their homes; so much so, that the entire army should feel united in their joys and in their sorrows. This unity of people will give them added strength against the enemy. Continue to maintain a kindly attitude towards them so that they might feel ever attached to you. The fact is that the real happiness of the administrators and their most pleasant comfort lies in establishing justice in the state and maintaining affectionate relations with the people. Their sincerity of feeling is expressed in the love and regard they show to you, on which alone depends the safety of the administrators.

Your advice to the army will be of no avail, unless and until you show affection to both men and officers, in order that they might not regard the government as an opposite burden or contribute to its downfall.

Continue to satisfy their needs and praise them over and over again for what services they have rendered. Such an attitude, God willing will require the brave to braver actions and induce the timid to deeds of bravery.

Try to enter into the feelings of others and do not foist the mistake of one another and do not grudge dispensing appropriate rewards. See to it you do not show favors to one who has achieved nothing but merely counts on his family position; and do not with-hold proper reward from one who has done great deeds simply because he holds a low position in life.

THE REAL GUIDANCE

Turn to God and to His Prophet for guidance whenever you feel uncertain regarding your actions. There is the commandment of God delivered to those people whom He wishes to guide aright: “O people of the faith! Obey God and obey His Prophet and obey those who hold authority over you. And refer to God and His Prophet whenever there is difference of opinion among you.” To turn to God is in reality to consult the Book of God; and to turn to the Prophet is to follow his universally accepted traditions.

CHIEF JUDGE

Select for your chief judge one from the people who is by far the best among them-one who is not obsessed with domestic worries, one who cannot be intimidated, one who does not err too often, one who does not turn back from a right path once he finds it, one who is not self-centered or avaricious, one who will not decide before knowing the full facts, one who will weigh with care every attendant doubt and pronounce a clear verdict after taking everything into full consideration, one who will not grow restive over the arguments of advocates and who will examine with patience every new disclosure of fact and who will be strictly impartial in his decision, one whom flattery cannot mislead or one who does not exult over his position. But it is not easy to find such men.

Once you have selected the right man for the office, pay him handsomely enough, to let him live in comfort and in keeping with his position, enough to keep him above temptation. Give him a position in your court so high that none can even dream of coveting it and so high that neither back biting nor intrigue can touch him.

SUBORDINATE JUDICIARY

Beware! The utmost care should be exercised in his selection: for it is a high office, which adventurous self-seekers aspire to secure and exploit in their selfish interests. For the selection of your chief judge, give careful consideration to the selection of other officers. Confirm them in their appointments after approved apprenticeship and probation. Never select men for responsible posts either out of any regard for personal connections or under any influence, for that might lead to injustice and corruption.

Of these, select for higher posts men of experience, men firm in faith and belonging to good families. Such men will not fall an easy prey to temptations and will discharge their duties with an eye on the abiding good of others. Increase their salaries to give them a contented life. A contented living is a help to self-purification. They will not feel the urge to tax the earnings of their subordinates for their own upkeep. They will then have no excuse either to go against your instructions or misappropriate state funds. Keep a watch over them without their knowledge. Perchance they may develop true honesty and true concern for the public welfare. But whenever any of them is accused of dishonesty, and the guilt is confirmed by the report of your secret service, then regard this as sufficient to convict him. Let the punishment be corporeal and let that be dealt with in public at an appointed place of degradation.

REVENUE ADMINISTRATION

Great care is to be exercised in revenue administration to ensure the prosperity of those who pay the revenue to the state; for it is on their prosperity depends the prosperity of others, particularly the prosperity of the masses. Indeed, the state exists on its revenue. You should regard the proper upkeep of the land in cultivation as of greater importance than the collection of revenue, for revenue cannot be derived except by making the land productive. He who demands revenue without helping the cultivator to improve his land, inflicts unmerited hardship on the cultivator and ruins the State. The rule of such a person does not last long. If

the cultivators ask for reduction of their land tax for having suffered from epidemic or drought or excess of rains or the barrenness of the soil or floods damaging their crops, then, reduce the tax accordingly, so that their condition might improve. Do not mind the loss of revenue on that account for that will return to you one day manifold in the hour of greater prosperity of the land and enable you to improve the condition of your towns and raise the prestige of your state. You will be the object of universal praise. The people will believe in your sense of justice. The confidence, which they will place in you in consequence will prove your strength, as they will be found ready to share your burdens.

You may settle in land any number of people but discontent will overtake them if the land is not improved. The cause of the cultivator's ruin is the rulers who are bent feverishly on accumulating wealth at all costs, out of fear that their rule might not last long. Such are the people who do not learn from examples or precedents.

CLERICAL ESTABLISHMENT

Keep an eye on your establishment and your scribes; and select the best among them for your confidential correspondence, such among these as possess high character and deserve your full confidence, men who may not exploit their privileged position to go against you, and who may not grow neglectful of their duties, and who in the drafting of treaties may not succumb to external temptation and harm your interests, or fail to render you proper assistance and to save you from trouble, and who in carrying out their duties can realize their serious responsibilities, for he who does not realize his own responsibility can hardly appraise the responsibilities of others. Do not select men for such work merely on the strength of your first impressions of your affection or good faith; or as a matter of fact, the pretensions of a good many who are really devoid of honesty and good breeding may cheat even the intelligence of rulers. Selection should be made after due probation – probation which should be the test of righteousness. In making direct appointments from people, see to it that those selected possess influence with the people and who enjoy the reputation of being honest; for such selection is agreeable both to God and the Ruler. For every department of administration, let there be a head, whom no trying task might cause worry and no pressure of work annoy.

And remember that every weakness of any one among your establishment and scribe, which you may overlook, will be written down against you in your scroll of deeds.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Adopt useful schemes placed before those engaged in trade and industry, and help them with wise counsels. Some of them live in towns, and some move from place to place with their ware and tools and earn their living by manual labor. Trade and industry are sources of profit to the state. While the general public are not inclined to bear the strain, those engaged in their professions take the trouble to collect commodities from far and near, from land and from across the sea, and from mountains and forests and naturally derive benefits.

It is this class of peace-loving people from whom no disturbance need be feared. They love peace and order; indeed they are incapable of creating disorder. Visit every part of the country and establish personal contact with this class, and enquire into their condition. But bear in

mind that a good many of them are intensely greedy and are inured to bad dealings. They hoard grain and try to sell it at a high price; and this is most harmful to the public. It is a blot on the name of the ruler not to fight this evil. Prevent them from hoarding; for the Prophet of God–Peace be on him–had prohibited it. And see to it that trade is carried on with the utmost ease, that the scales are evenly held and that prices are so fixed that neither the seller nor the buyer is put to a loss. And if, inspite of your warning, should any one go against your commands and commit the crime of hoarding, then inflict upon him a severe punishment.

THE POOR

Beware! Fear God when dealing with the problem of the poor who have none to patronize them, who are forlorn, indigent and helpless and are greatly torn in mind–victims to the vicissitudes of Time. Among them there are some who do not question their lot in life and who not withstanding their misery, do not go about seeking alms. For God's sake, safeguard their rights; for on you rests responsibility of protecting their interests. Assign for their upliftment a portion of the state exchequer (Baitul-mal), wherever they may be, whether close at hand or far away from you. The rights of the two should be equal in your eye. Do not let any preoccupations slip them from your mind; for no excuse whatsoever for the disregard of their rights will be acceptable to God. Do not treat their interests as of less importance than your own, and never keep them outside the purview of your important considerations, and mark the persons who look down upon them and of whose condition they keep you in ignorance.

Select from among your officers such men as are upright and God-fearing and who can keep you properly informed of the condition of the poor. Make such provisions for these poor people as shall not oblige you to offer an excuse before God on the Day of Judgment; for, it is this section of the people more than any other which deserves benevolent treatment. Seek your reward from God by giving to each of them what is due to him and enjoin on yourself as a sacred duty the task of meeting the needs of such aged among them as have no independent means of livelihood and are averse to seeking alms. And it is the discharge of this duty that usually proves very trying to rulers, but is very welcome to societies, which are gifted with foresight. It is only such societies or nations who truly carry out with equanimity their covenant with God to discharge their duty to the poor.

OPEN CONFERENCES

Meet the oppressed and the lowly periodically in an open conference and, conscious of the Divine Presence there, have a heart-to-heart talk with them, and let none from your armed guard or civil officers or members of the police or the Intelligence Department be by your side, so that the representative of the poor might state their grievances fearlessly and without reserve. For I have heard the Prophet of God say that no nation or society in which the strong do not discharge their duty to the weak will occupy a high position. Bear with composure any strong language which they may use, and do not get annoyed if they cannot state their case lucidly, even so, God will open for you His door of blessings and rewards. Whatever you cannot afford to give, make that clear to them with utmost sincerity.

There are certain things, which call for prompt action. Accept the recommendations made by your officers for the redress of the grievances of the clerical staff. See to it that petitions or

applications submitted for your consideration are brought to your notice the very day they are submitted, however much your officers might try to intercept them. Dispose the day's work that very day, for the coming day will bring with it its own task.

COMMUNION WITH GOD

And then do not forget to set apart the best of your time for communion with God, although every moment of yours is for Him only, provided it is spent sincerely in the service of your people. The special time that you give to prayer in the strict religious sense is to be devoted to the performance of the prescribed daily prayers. Keep yourself occupied with prayers during the day and in the night and to gain perfect communion, do not as far as possible, let your prayers grow tiresome. And when you lead in congregation prayer, do not let your prayer be so lengthy as to cause discomfort to the congregation or raise in them the feeling of dislike for it or liquidate its effect: for in the congregation there may be invalids and also those who have to attend to pressing affairs of their own.

When I had asked of the Prophet of God on receiving an order to proceed to Yemen, how I should lead the people over there in prayer, he said, "Perform your prayers even as the weakest among you would do; and set an example of considerateness to the faithful."

ALOOFNESS NOT DESIRABLE

Alongside of the observance of all that I said bear one thing in mind. Never for any length of time keep yourself aloof from the people, for to do so it is to keep oneself ignorant of their affairs. It develops in the ruler a wrong perspective and renders him unable to distinguish between what is important and what is not, between right and wrong, and between truth and falsehood. The ruler is after all human; and he cannot form a correct view of anything, which is out of sight. There is no distinctive sign attached to truth, which may enable one to distinguish between the different varieties of truth and falsehood. The fact is that you must be one of the two things. Either you are just or unjust. If you are just, then you will not keep yourself away from the people, but will listen to them and meet their requirements. On the other hand, if you are unjust, the people themselves will keep away from you. What virtue is there in keeping aloof? At all events aloofness is not desirable especially when it is your duty to attend to the needs of the people. Complaints of oppression by your officers or petitions for justice should not prove irksome to you.

Make this clear to yourself that those immediately about and around you will like to exploit their position to covet what belongs to others and commit acts of injustice. Suppress such a tendency in them. Make a rule of your conduct never to give even a small piece of land to any of your relations. That will prevent them from causing harm to the interests of others and save you from courting the misappropriation of both God and man.

Deal justice squarely regardless of the fact whether one is a relation or not. If any of your relations or companions violates the law, mete out the punishment prescribed by law however painful it might be to you personally; for it will be all to the good of the State. If at any time people suspect, that you have been unjust to them in any respect, disclose your mind to them and remove their suspicions. In this way, your mind will become attuned to the sense of justice

and people will begin to love you. It will also fulfill your wish that you should enjoy their confidence.

PEACE AND TREATIES

Bear in mind that you do not throw away the offer of peace, which your enemy may himself make. Accept it, for that will please God. Peace is a source of comfort to the army; it reduces your worries and promotes order in the state. But beware! Be on your guard when the peace is signed; for, certain types of enemies propose terms of peace just to lull you into a sense of security only to attack you again when you are off your guard. So you should exercise the utmost vigilance on your part, and place no undue faith in their protestations. But, if under the peace treaty you have accepted any obligations, discharge those obligations scrupulously. It is a trust and must be faithfully upheld and whenever you have promised anything, keep it with all the strength that you command, for whatever difference of opinion might exist on other matter, there is nothing so noble as the fulfillment of a promise. This is recognized even among the non Muslims, for they know the dire consequences which follow from the breaking of covenants. So never make excuses in discharging your responsibility and never break a promise, nor cheat your enemy. For, breach of promise is an act against God, and none except the positively wicked acts against God.

Indeed divine promises are a blessing spread over all mankind. The promise of God is a refuge sought after, even by the most powerful on earth; for there is no risk of being cheated. So, do not make any promise from which you may afterwards offer excuses to retract; nor do you go back upon what you have confirmed to abide by; nor do you break it, however galling it may at first prove to be. For it is far better to wait in patience for wholesome results to follow than to break it out of any apprehensions.

Beware! Abstain from shedding blood without a valid cause. There is nothing more harmful than this, which brings about one's ruin. The blood that is willfully shed shortens the life of a state. On the Day of Judgment it is this crime for which one will have to answer first. So, beware! Do not wish to build the strength of your state on blood; for, it is this blood, which ultimately weakens the state and passes it on to other hands. Before me and my God no excuse for willful killing can be entertained.

Murder is a crime, which is punishable by death. If on any account the corporeal punishment dealt by the state for any lesser crime results in the death of the guilty, let not the prestige of the state stand in any way of the deceased's relations claiming blood money.

LAST INSTRUCTIONS

Do not make haste to do a thing before its time, nor put it off when the right moment arrives. Do not insist on doing a wrong thing, nor show slackness in rectifying a wrong thing. Perform everything in its proper time, and let everything occupy its proper place. When the people as a whole agree upon a thing, do not impose your own view on them and do not neglect to discharge the responsibility that rests on you in consequence. For, the eyes of the people will be on you and you are answerable for whatever you do to them. The slightest dereliction of duty will bring its own retribution. Keep your anger under control and keep your hands and

tongue in check. Whenever you become angry try to restrain yourself or else you will simply increase your worries.

It is imperative that you study carefully the principles, which have inspired just and good rulers who have gone before you. Give close thought to the example of our Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him), his traditions, and the commandments of the Book of God and whatever you might have assimilated from my own way of dealing with things. Endeavor to the best of your ability to carry out the instructions which I have given you here and which you have solemnly undertaken to follow. By means of this order, I enjoin on you not to succumb to the prompting of your own heart or to turn away from the discharge of duties entrusted to you.

I seek the refuge in the Almighty and His unlimited sphere of blessings, and invite you to pray with me that He may give us together the grace to surrender willingly our will to His will, and to enable us to acquit ourselves well before him and His creation; so that mankind might cherish our memory and our work survives. I seek of God the culmination of His blessings and pray that He may grant you and me His grace and the honor of martyrdom in His cause. Verily, we have to return to Him. I invoke His blessings on the Prophet of God and his pure Progeny.

A LETTER FROM FATHER TO SON

After returning from the battle of Siffeen, Imam gave certain advices to one of his sons. Some historians consider him to be Imam Hasan (a.s.), while others are of the opinion that he was Muhammad-E-Hanafia. He wrote them in the form of a will. They deal with almost every subject of life, which goes a long way to make a man successful in life, brave, chivalrous, humane, generous, virtuous and God-fearing.

These advices are from a father, who realizes the mortality of life, who is old, who has patiently borne reverses and calamities, who hates inordinate desires and has overcome them and who is shortly going to pass out of this sober ways of thinking and better ways of life. A desire which is rather difficult to be achieved (all the prophets and apostles have tried to achieve this end, but the lot of humanity even today is unenviable); a son who is mortal and is bound by nature to follow the road of all mortals, is subject to ailments, is surrounded by misfortunes and calamities, has to face oppressions and tyrannies, has often to confront and sometimes tolerate hypocrisy, deceit, guile, duplicity and treason, who is to end his life in death, is to bear sufferings, is the heir to a person who is dead and gone and who finally ended his life as a martyr to the animosity of his enemies (what a prophecy!).

This letter that was written nearly 1400 years ago by Hazrat Imam Ali (a.s.), is applicable and appropriate even to this day.

MY DEAR SON

After praise to Allah and the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s) let it be known to you that decay of health, passing away of time and nearness to death have made me realize I should give more thought to my future (next world) and to my people, advise them more and spend more time in equipping them mentally to face this world. I felt that my own sons and my near ones have as much right to utilize my experiences and knowledge, all the ups and downs of life, all the realities of life and the hereafter. I decided, therefore, to spend more time and to prepare you for your future. This was neither selfishness nor self-esteem, nor any mental luxury of giving away advices, but it was the sincere desire of making you see the world as I found it, looking at the realities of time as I looked them, and doing the right thing at the right time and the right place as it should be done, which made me write down these advices to you. You will not find anything but truths and realities in them.

My dear son, you are a part my body and soul. Whenever I look at you I feel as I am looking at myself. If any calamity happens to you, I feel as if it has happened to me. Your death will make me feel as if it was my own death. Your affairs are like my own affairs. Therefore I commit these advices to you. I want you to pay attention to them and to guard them so that they may remain in your life (to personally guide you).

My first and foremost advice to you, my son, is to fear Allah. Be His obedient servant. Keep His thought always fresh in your mind. Be attached to and carefully guard the rope, which connects you to Him (Islam). Can any other connection be stronger, more durable and more lasting than this to command greater respect and consideration or to replace it?

Accept good advices and refresh your mind with them. Adopt piety and kill inordinate desires with its help. Build your character with the help of sincere faith in religion and Allah. Subjugate your self-willed, obstinate and refractory nature with the vision of death, make it see the mortality of life and of all that it holds dear, to realize the actuality of misfortunes and adversities, the changes of circumstance and times, and compel it to study the histories of past people. Persuade it to see the ruined cities, the dilapidated palaces and decaying signs and relics of fallen empires and past nations. Then meditate over the activities of those people over what all they have done, when they started their careers; where, when and how they were actually brought to an end; where are they now? What have they actually gained out of life, and what was their contribution to human welfare. If you carefully ponder over these problems you will find that each one of these people parted with all that they cherished and loved and are now in a solitary abode alone and unattended, and you will also be like them.

Be sure to provide well for your future abode. Do not lose eternal blessings for the sake of worldly pleasures.

Do not talk about things you do not know. Do not speculate and pass judgment over subjects, which you are not in a position to form an opinion about. Give up when there is a possibility of your going astray. It is better to give up the quest than to advance forward facing uncertain dangers and unforeseen risks.

Fight, whenever required, to defend the cause of Allah. Do not be afraid that people will laugh at you, censure your action or slander you. Fearlessly and broadly help truth and justice. Bear patiently the sufferings and face bravely the obstacles, which come your way when you try to uphold them. Adhere to the cause of truth and justice whenever you find them. Try to be well-versed in Islamic jurisprudence and theology, and acquire a thorough knowledge of the laws of this religion.

Develop patience against sufferings, calamities and adversities. This virtue of patience is one of the highest values of morality and nobility of character, and is the best habit one can develop. Trust in Allah and let your mind seek His protection in every calamity and suffering. You will thus entrust yourself and your affairs to the Best Trustee and to the Mightiest Guardian. Do not seek help and protection from anybody but Allah. Reserve your prayers, your requests, your solicitations and your entreaties to Him and Him alone because to grant as well as to withhold lies in His and only in His power. Ask as much of His favors and seek as much of His Guidance as often as you can.

Try to understand my advices, ponder over them deeply; do not take them lightly and do not turn away from them. The best knowledge is that which benefits the listener. Knowledge, which does not benefit anyone, is useless to learn or remember.

My dear son when I realized that I was getting old and when I felt that weakness and feebleness were gradually creeping over me, I hastened to advise you on the best ways of leading a noble, virtuous and useful life. I hated the idea that either death overtakes me before I tell you all I want to tell or my mental capacities, like my body strength, fall prey to deterioration. I convey all this knowledge to you, otherwise inordinate desires, temptations and inducements may influence you, or adverse changes of times and circumstances may drag you into their mire, and I would leave you like an unbroken and untrained colt. A young and fresh mind is like virgin soil, which allows things sown in it to grow verdantly and to bear

luxuriantly. Therefore, I have made use of early opportunity to educate and train you, before your mind loses its freshness, before it gets hardened and warped, before you start facing life unprepared for the encounter, and before you are forced to use your decisions and discretions without gaining advantages of cumulated traditions, collected knowledge and experiences of others. These advices and counsels that I give will save you from the worry of acquiring knowledge, gathering experiences and soliciting others for advice. Now you can easily make use of all the knowledge men acquired with great care, trouble and patience; things which were hidden and which only experiences and sufferings could bring to light are made easily available to you through these advices.

My dear son! Though the span of my life is not as large as that of others who have passed away before me, I took great care to study their lives. Assiduously I went through their activities, I contemplated over their deliberations and deeds, I studied their remains, relics and ruins; and I pondered over their lives so deeply that I felt as if I had lived and worked with them from early ages of history down to our times. I know what did good and what brought harm to them. Sifting the good from the bad, I am concentrating within these pages the knowledge that I gathered. Through these advices I have tried to show you the value of honest living and high thinking, and the dangers of a vicious and sinful life. I have covered and guarded every aspect of your life since it is my duty as a kind, considerate and loving father.

From the very beginning I wanted to help you develop a noble character and prepare you for the life, which you will have to lead. I wanted to train you to grow up to be a young man with a noble character, an open and honest mind, and a clear and precise knowledge of things around you. Originally my desire was only to teach you the Holy Book thoroughly, to make you understand its intricacies, to impart you with the complete knowledge of His Orders and interdictions and not to leave you at the mercy of the knowledge of other people. But after having succeeded in this task, I felt nervous that I may leave you untrained and uneducated in those subjects which themselves are subject to so much confusion and so many contradictions; whose confusions have been worse confounded by selfish desires, warped minds, wicked ways of life, and sinful modes of thinking. Therefore, I have noted down, in these lines, the basic principles of nobility, piety, truth and justice. You may feel they are overbearing and harsh, but my desire is to arm you with this knowledge instead of leaving you unarmed to face the world where there is every danger of loss and damnation. As you are a noble, virtuous and pious young man, I am sure you will receive Divine Guidance and Succor. I am sure He will help you to achieve your aim in life. I want you to promise yourself to follow my advices carefully.

Remember my son, the best advices are those which tell you to fear Allah, to confine yourself to the performance of those duties which have been incumbent upon you by Him, and to follow the footsteps of your ancestors (The Holy Prophet and Hazrat Ali), and your pious relatives. Verily they carefully scanned their thoughts and deeds, as you must try to do. This kind of deliberation made them take from life what was really the best and forsake that which was not incumbent upon them. If your mind refuses to accept my advices and you persist to try own experiments, then you are at liberty to arrive at your conclusions, but only after carefully studying the subject and acquiring the knowledge necessary for such decisions. You must not allow uncertainties and doubts to poison your mind and skepticism or irrational likes and dislikes to affect your views. Remember that before you start thinking about a problem seek guidance from the Lord and beseech Him to give you a lead in the right direction; avoid confusion in your ideas and do not let disbelief (about truth of the teachings of religion) take hold of your mind, because one will lead you towards agnosticism, and other

towards error and sin. When you are thus prepared to solve any problem and you are sure that you posses a clear mind, a sincere and firm desire to reach the truth, to say the correct thing and to do the correct deed, then carefully go through the advices that I am leaving you. If your mind is not as clear and free from doubts as you wish it to be, then you will be wandering in the wilderness of uncertainties and errors like a camel suffering from night blindness. Under these circumstances it is best that you give up the quest, because with such limitations none can ever reach the truth.

My dear son, carefully and very carefully remember these sayings of mine, that the Lord, Who is the Master of death, is also the Master of life. The Creator is the Annihilator. And the One who annihilates has the power to bring everything back to existence again. The One who sends you calamities is the One who will bring you safe out of them.

Remember that this world is working under laws ordained by Him and it consists of the sum total of actions and reactions, causes and effects, calamities and reverses, pains and pleasures; and reward and punishment; but this is not all which the picture depicts; there are things in it which are beyond our understanding, things which we do not and cannot know and things which cannot be foreseen and foretold. For instance, the rewards and punishments of the Day of Judgment: Remember that your lack of understanding is due to the insufficiency of your knowledge. Remember that when you came into this world your first appearance was that of an ignorant, uneducated and unlearned being then you gradually acquired knowledge. There are several things (in this world), which were beyond your knowledge, which perplexed and surprised you and about which you did not understand “why” and “how”; gradually you acquired knowledge about some of those subjects and in the future your knowledge and vision may further expand. Therefore, the best thing for you to do is to seek guidance of One Who has created and Who maintains and nourishes you. You must fear His Wrath as well as His punishments. Your requests and solicitations should be to Him alone; you should be afraid of Him and nobody else.

Be it known to you, my son, that nobody has given mankind such detailed information about Allah (His mercy, His kindness, His glory, His might and His power) as our Holy Prophet (s.a.). I advise you to have faith in his teachings, to make him your leader and to accept his guidance for your salvation. Thus advising you, I have done the best that I can do as a sincere and loving adviser, and I assure you, however you may try to find a better way for your good, you will not find any superior to the one advised by me. Remember my son that had there been any other God, beside the One, he would have also sent his messengers and prophets and they would have pointed out to mankind the domain and glory of this second god and you would have also seen them. But no such incident ever took place. He is one God whom we all should recognize and worship. He has explained Himself. Nobody is a partner to Him in His domain, might and glory. He is eternal, has always been and shall remain when every other thing will disappear into nothingness and there shall be no end to His existence. His glory and His Existence is so supreme, pre-eminent, transcendent, incomparable and excellent that it is beyond the grasp of minds and intellects. None can understand or visualize Him. When you have accepted these truths and realities then your behavior so far as His orders and interdictions are concerned, should be that of a person who realizes that this status, power and position is nothing when compared to that of his Lord, who wants to gain His favor through Prayers and obedience who fears His Wrath as well as His punishments, and Who is absolutely in need of His help and protection. Remember my son, that God has not ordered you to do anything but that which is

good and which propagates and distributes goodness, and He has not interdicted you from anything but that which is bad and will bring about bad effects.

My dear son, through this message of mine, I have explained everything about this world, how fickle and quick changing is its attitude, how short-lived and evanescent is everything that it holds or offers, and how fast it changes its moods and its favors. I have also explained about the life to come; the pleasures and blessings provided there are the everlasting peace, comfort and happiness arranged for in the heaven. I have given enough examples of both aspects of life, before and after death, so that you may know the reality and lead life on the basis of that knowledge.

The truth is that the people who have carefully studied the conditions of life and the world pass their days as if they know that they are travelers who have to leave a place which is barren (practically a desert with the extreme scarcity of food and water), unhealthy and uncongenial and they have to go towards lands which are fertile, healthy, congenial and where there is abundant provision of all comforts and pleasures. They have eagerly taken up the journey, happy in the hope of future blessings and peace. They have willingly accepted the sufferings, troubles and hazards of the way, parting of friends, scarcity of food and comfort during the pilgrimage so that they may reach the journey's end and a happy place. They do not refuse to bear any discomfort and do not grudge any expenditure on the way (giving out alms and charities), and helping the poor and needy. (In another paragraph further on, Imam has developed the idea that charity is the best way of providing for the next world). Every step which they put forward towards their goal, however tiring and exhausting it may be, is a happy event of their lives. On the contrary the condition of those people, who are staying in fertile and happy regions and who have to undertake a journey, knowing full well that the journey is going to end in an inhospitable, arid and unfertile land: can anything be more loathsome to them than this journey? How they would hate to leave the place where they are and to arrive at the place, which they so much hate, and which is so dismaying, dreadful and frightening.

My dear son, so far as your behavior with other human beings is concerned, let your 'self' act as scales to help you judge its goodness or wickedness. Do unto others as you wish others to do unto you. Whatever you like for others, and whatever you dislike to happen to you, spare others from such happenings. Do not oppress and tyrannize anyone because you surely do not like to be oppressed and tyrannized. Be kind and sympathetic to others, as you certainly desire others to treat you kindly and sympathetically. Whatever habits you find objectionable, and loathsome in others, abstain from developing those traits of character. If you are satisfied or feel happy in receiving a certain kind of behavior from others, you may behave with others in the same exact way. Do not speak about them in the way that you do not like others to speak about you. Do not speak on the subject about which you know little or nothing, and if you at all want to speak on anything or about anyone of whom you are fully aware then avoid scandal, libel and aspersion, as you do not like yourself to be scandalized and libeled in the same manner.

Remember, son, that vanity and conceit are forms of folly, these traits will bring to you serious harm and will be a constant source of danger to you. Therefore, lead a well-balanced life (neither be conceited nor suffer from inferiority complex), and exert yourself to earn an honest living. But do not act like treasurer for somebody.

And, whenever you receive guidance of the Lord to achieve the things you desire then do not get proud of your achievement but be humble and submissive to Him and realize that your success was due to His mercy and favor.

Remember, my son, that before you is a long and arduous journey (life). The journey is not only very long, exhausting, laborious and onerous, but the route is mostly through dismal, dreary and deserted regions, where you will be sadly in need of refreshing, renovating and enlivening aids and you cannot dispense with such provisions as to keep you going and to maintain you till the end of your journey, the Day of Judgment. But remember that you do not overload yourself (do not entrust yourself with so many obligations and duties that you cannot honorably fulfill them or with such luxurious life as to be wicked and vicious) because if this load is more than what you can conveniently bear then your journey will be very painful and toilsome. If you find yourself around poor, needy and destitute people who are willing to carry your load for you as far as the Day of Judgment then consider this to be a boon, engage them and pass burden on to them, (distribute your wealth amongst the poor, destitute and needy - help others to the best of your ability and be kind and sympathetic to human beings). Thus, relieve yourself of the heavy responsibility and liability of submitting an account on the Day of Reckoning of how you have made use of His favors (of health, wealth, power and position). Thus you may arrive at the end of your journey, light and fresh, and may have enough provision for you there (reward for having done your duty to man and God in this world). Have as many weight carriers as you can (help as many people as you can) so that you may not miss them when you very badly need them (when your sins of commission and omission will be balanced against your good deeds. You must have enough good deeds to turn the scales in your favor). Remember that all you give out in charities and good deeds are like loans powerful, make use of your wealth and power in such a way that you get all that back on the day when you will be poor and helpless (The Day of Judgment). Be it known to you, my son, that your passage lies through an appalling dreadful valley (death or grave) and the journey is extremely tiring and arduous. Here a man with light weight is far better than an overburdened person and one who can travel fast will pass through it quicker that none whom encumbrance forces to go slow. You shall have to pass through this valley. The only way out of it is either in the Heaven or in the Hell; (there is no other way out of it and no possibility of retracing one's step). Therefore, it is wise to send your things there before you, pre-arrange for the place of your stay before you reach there; because after death there is no repentance and no possibility of coming back to this world to undo the wrong done by you.

Realize this truth, my son, that the Lord Who owns and holds the treasures of the heaven and the earth has given you permission to ask and beg for them, and has promised to grant your prayers. He has told you to pray for His favors that they may be granted and to ask for His blessings that they may be bestowed. He has not appointed guards to prevent your prayers from reaching Him. Nor there is any need for anybody to intercede before Him on your behalf. If you go back upon your promises, if you break your vows or start doing things that you have repented from, He will not immediately punish you, neither He refuses you His favors and grants in haste; and if you repent once again He neither taunts you nor betrays you, though you may fully deserve both, but He accepts your repentance and forgives you. He never grudges His forgiveness nor refuses His mercy; on the contrary He has decreed repentance as a virtue and pious deed. The Merciful Lord has ordered that every evil deed of yours will be counted as one and a good deed and pious action will be rewarded tenfold. He has left the door of repentance open. He hears you whenever you call Him. He accepts your prayers whenever you pray to Him.

You beg of Him to grant you your heart's desires; you lay before Him the secrets of your heart; you tell Him about the calamities that have befallen you and misfortunes, which face you and beseech His help to overcome them. You invoke His help and support in difficulties and distress. You implore Him to grant you long life and sound health; you pray to Him for prosperity you request of Him such favors and grants that none but He can bestow and award.

Think that by simply granting you the privilege of praying for His favors and mercies, He has handed over the keys of His treasures to you. Whenever you are in need you pray and He confers His favors and blessings.

But some times when you find that your requests are not immediately granted then you need not be disappointed. Because grant of prayers often rests with the true purpose and intention of the implorer. Some times the prayers are delayed because the Merciful Lord wants you to receive further rewards patiently bearing calamities and sufferings and still believe sincerely in His help. Thus, you may be awarded better favors than you requested. Some times your prayers are turned down, and this is also in your interest; because you often, unknowingly, ask for things that are really harmful to you. If your requests are granted they will do more harm than good, and many of your requests may be such that if granted they will result in your eternal damnation. Thus, the refusal to accede to your solicitations is a blessing in disguise for you. But very often your requests, if they are not really harmful in this world or in the hereafter, may be delayed but they are granted in quantities much more than you had asked for, bringing more blessings than you could ever imagine. So you should be very careful in asking Allah for His favors; only pray for such things which are really beneficial to you, and these benefits are lasting and in the long run they do not end in harm. Remember, my dear son, that wealth and power (If you pray for them) are such things that they will not always be with you and may bring harm to you in the Hereafter.

Be it known to you, my son, that you are created for the next world and not for this. You are born to die and not to live forever. Your stay in this world is temporary. You live in a place, which is subject to decay and destruction. It is place where you will have to be busy getting ready for the next world. It is a road (to the next world) on which you are standing. Death is following you. You cannot run away from it. However hard you may try to avoid it, it is going to catch you sooner or later. Therefore, take care that it may not catch you unaware and unprepared and no chance is left to you to repent the vices and sins committed and undo the harm done by you. If death catches you unaware then you are eternally dammed.

Therefore, my son, always keep three things in mind; death, your deeds and actions and the Hereafter. In this way you will always be ready to face death and it will not catch you unaware.

My dear son, do not be carried away and do not be lured by the infatuations of the worldly people in this vivacious life and its pleasures.

Do not be impressed by the sight of their acute struggle to possess and own this world. God has very mercifully explained to you everything about this world, not only the Merciful Lord but this world has told you everything; it has disclosed to you its mortality; it has openly declared its weakness, its shortcomings and its vices.

Remember that these worldly people are barking dogs, and hungry and ferocious beasts. Some of them are constantly barking at the others. Their mighty lords massacre the poor and weak.

Their inordinate desires and their greed have such a complete hold over them that you will find some of them like animals tamed and tied with the rope round their feet and neck. (They have lost freedom of thought and cannot come out of the enslavement of desire and habit). There are others whom wealth and power have turned mad. They behave like unruly beasts, trampling, crushing and killing their fellow beings and destroying things around them. The history of this world is merely a record of such incidents, some big and some small; the difference is of might, but the intensity is the same. These people have lost the balance of their minds. They do not know what they are doing and where they are going; scan their activities and study their ways of thinking as you find them confused and irrational. They appear like cattle wandering in the dreary desert, where there is no water to drink and no food to eat, no shepherd to care for them and no guardian to look after them. What has actually happened to them is that the vicious world has taken possession of them; it is dragging them wherever it likes and is treating them as if they are blind because it has really blindfolded them against divine lights of true religion. They are wandering without true aims and sober purposes in the wonderful show that the world has staged for them; they are fully drunk with the wine and pleasures amassed around them. They take this world to be their god and nourisher. The world is playing with them and they are playing with it, and have forgotten and forsaken everything else.

But the nights of enjoyment and pleasures won't last forever for anybody; the dawn of realities will break sooner or later. The caravan of life will surely reach its destination one day. One, who has nights and days acting as pie-bald horses for carrying him onward to his journey's end, must remember that though he may feel as if he is enroute to his destination. Every day is carrying him a step further in his journey towards death.

Be it known to you, my son, that you cannot have every wish of yours granted, you cannot expect to escape death; and you are passing through your days of life as others before you have done. Therefore, control your expectations, desires and cravings; be moderate in your demands; earn your livelihood through scrupulously honest means; be concentrated with what you get honestly and honorably; go slow and do not let your desires drive you madly, because there are many desires which will lead you towards disappointments and loss. Remember that everyone who prays for a thing will not always get what he prays for, and everyone who controls his desires, has self respect and does not pray for things, will not always remain unlucky or disappointed. So, do not bring down your self-respect; do not be mean and submissive. Do not subjugate yourself through these vile and base traits, though they may appear to make it possible for you to achieve your heart's desires because nothing in this world can compensate for the loss of self-respect, nobleness of mind and honor.

Take care, my son, and be careful not to make yourself a slave for anybody. God has created you a free man. Do not sell away your freedom in return for anything. There is no actual gain and real value in benefits that you derive by selling your honor and self-respect or by subjugating yourself to disgrace, insults and indignities. There is no real good wealth and power that is acquired by foul means. Beware my son, that avarice and greed may not drive you towards destruction and damnation. If you can succeed in having nobody as your benefactor but God, then try your best to achieve this nobleness of character because He will grant you your share whether or not you try to gather around you donors, patrons and benefactors.

Remember that the little given to you by God is going to be more useful, serviceable, honorable and respectable than what is granted by man in copious and abundant quantities. What can a man give but part of that which God has granted him?

The losses that you suffer because of your silence can be easily compensated, but the losses, which arise out of excessive and loose talk are difficult to requite. Do you not see that the best way of guarding a bay is by closing its mouth?

To guard what you already possess is better than to ask for what others possess.

The bitterness of disappointment, deprivation and poverty is actually sweeter than the disgrace and humiliation of begging.

Returns of hard but respectable work, though small in quantity, are better than the wealth acquired through sin and wickedness.

Nobody can guard your secrets better than you.

Often a man tries his best to acquire a thing, which is the most harmful to him. Often one does himself the worst harm.

One who talks too much makes most mistakes.

One who often thinks and reflects develops foresight and vision.

By socializing with good people you will develop goodness in your character, and by avoiding the company of wicked persons you will abstain from wickedness.

Livelihood acquired by foul means is the worst form of livelihood.

To oppress a weak and helpless person is the worst form of tyranny and wickedness.

If your kindness or indulgence is going to bring forth cruel results then severity or strictness is real kindness.

Often, medicating results in disease; sometimes diseases prove to be health preservers.

Often you obtain warnings and advices from the people who are fit to warn and advise you, and often you will come across advisers who are not sincere.

Do not rely on vain hopes because vain hopes are assets of idiots and fools.

Wisdom is the name of the trait of remembering experiences and making use of them. The best experience is the one, which gives the best warning and advice.

Take advantage of opportunities before they turn their backs upon you (make hay while the sun shines).

All who try cannot succeed.

Those who die will not come back.

The worst form of folly is to waste the opportunities of life as well as to lose salvation.

For every action there is a reaction.

Shortly you will get what has been destined.

There is an element of risk and speculation in every trade as well as danger of loss.

Often small returns prove as beneficial as big profits.

An accessory or accomplice who insults you and a friend who has not formed a good opinion of you will not be of any help or use to you.

Treat those with consideration and kindness over whom you have power and authority.

Do not run the risk of endangering yourself through irrational, unreasonable and extravagant hopes.

Take care and do not be fooled by flattery.

Do good to your brother when he is doing harm to you. When he declines to recognize the kinship befriend him, help him and try to maintain relations. If he is miserable and refuses to give you monetary help, be generous and support him financially. If he is harsh and cruel, be kind and considerate to him. If he harms you, accept his excuses. Behave as if he is a master and you are a slave and he is a benefactor and you are a beneficiary. But be careful that you do not thus behave with undeserving and mean persons.

Do not develop friendship with the enemy of your friend, otherwise your friend will turn into an enemy.

Advise your friends sincerely and to the best of your ability though he may not like it.

Keep a complete control over your temper and anger, because such control produces good results at the end.

Be mild, pleasant and lenient with he who is harsh, gross and strict with you. Gradually he will turn to your way of behavior.

Grant favor and be considerate with your enemy, because you will thus gain either one or the other of the two kinds of victories: (one rising above your enemy, the other of reducing intensity of his enmity).

If you want to cease relations with your friend, do not break off totally, let your heart retain some consideration (if not love) for him, so that you will still have (at least) some regard for him is he comes back.

Do not disappoint a person who holds a good opinion of you, and do not make him change his opinion.

Under the impression that you, as a friend, can behave as you like, do not violate the rights of your friend, because when deprived he will no longer remain your friend.

Do not ill-treat members of your household (wife, children and dependants), and do not behave with them as if you are the worst tempered and the most cruel man alive.

Do not run after him who tries to avoid you.

The greatest achievement of your character is that the enmity of your brother against you dare not overcome the consideration and friendship you feel towards him, and his ill-treatment cannot over balance your kind treatment to him.

Do not get too worried and depressed over oppressions and cruelties, because whoever oppresses or tyrannizes you is in reality doing harm to himself.

Never ill-treat a person who has done good unto you.

Know it well, son, that there are two kinds of livelihood: one which you are searching for and the other which wants you (which has been destined for you); it will reach you even if you do not try to obtain it.

To be submissive, humble and begging when one is powerless and poor, and to be arrogant, oppressive and cruel when in power and opulence are two ugly traits of human character.

Nothing in this world is really useful and beneficial unless it has some utility and benefit in the next world. If you want to lament over things, which you have lost in this world, then worry about the loss of things, which had immortal values for you.

The past and almost all, which was in your possession during the past is not with you now. You may thus rationally come to the conclusion that the present and all which is in your possession now will also leave you.

Do not be like a person on whom advices have no effect; they require punishment to correct them. Sensible and reasonable men acquire education and culture through advice; brutes always accept correction through punishment and chastisements.

Overcome your sorrows, worries and misfortunes through hard work and patience and faith in the Merciful Lord. One who gives up a straight path, honest and rational ways of thinking and working will harm himself.

A friend is like a relative and a true friend is one who speaks well of you even behind your back.

Inordinate desires have close relations with misfortunes and calamities.

Often close relatives behave more distantly than strangers and often those strangers help you more than your nearest relatives.

Poor is he who has no friends. Whoever forsakes truths finds that his path of life has become narrow and troublesome.

He who wants to retain his prestige and position, through contentment and honesty, will find them lasting assets.

The strongest relation is the one between man and God.

One who does not care for you is your enemy.

If there is a danger of death or damnation in achievement of an object then your safety lies in your failure to achieve it.

Weaknesses and shortcomings are not things to talk about.

Opportunities do not repeat themselves.

Sometimes very wise and learned persons fail to achieve the object they aim for, and foolish and uneducated people attain their purposes.

Postpone evil deeds as long as possible because you can commit them whenever you so desire (then why hurry in committing them).

To sever your relations with ignorant and uneducated people is itself like keeping company with wise and learned persons.

Whoever trusts this world is betrayed by it, and whoever gives it importance and exalts its position is disgraced and humiliated by it.

Every arrow of yours will not hit the bull's eye (every scheme will not succeed).

With a change of status and position your condition will also change.

Before ascertaining the conditions of a route find out what kind of persons will accompany you.

Instead of inquiring about the condition of a home, in which you are going to live, try to find out what kind of people your neighbors are.

Do not introduce ridiculous topics in your talk even if you have to repeat sayings to others.

Divide and distribute work amongst your servants, so that you can hold each one responsible for the work entrusted to him. This is a better and smoother way of carrying on work, than giving them an opportunity to throw work on somebody else.

Treat your family with love and respect, because they act as wings with which you fly, and as hands, which support you and fight for you. They are the people whom you turn to in trouble and in need.

My dear son, after having given you these advices, I entrust you to the Lord. He will help, guide and protect you in this world and Hereafter. I pray and beseech Him to take you under His protection in both the worlds.

In the Name of Allah The Beneficent, The Merciful

THE PROPHET'S LAST SERMON

This sermon was delivered on the ninth day of Dhul Hijjah 10 A.H. in the valley of Mount Arafat

"O People, lend me an attentive ear, for I know not whether, after this year, I shall ever be amongst you again. Therefore listen to what I am saying to you very carefully and take these words to those who could not be present here today.

O People, just as you regard this month, this day, this city as Sacred, so regard the life and property of every Muslim as sacred trust. Return the goods entrusted to you to their rightful owners. Hurt no one so that no one may hurt you.

Remember, that you will indeed meet your Sustainer, and that He will indeed reckon your deeds. Allah has forbidden you to take usury, therefore all usury obligations henceforth be waived.

Beware of Satan, for the safety of your religion. He has lost all hope that he will ever be able to lead you astray in big things, so beware of following him in small things.

O People, it is true that you have certain rights with regard to your women, but they also have rights over you. If they abide by your right then to them belongs the right to be fed and clothed in kindness. Do treat your women well and be kind to them for they are your partners and committed helpers. And it is your right that they do not make friends with any one of whom you do not approve, as well as never to commit adultery.

O People, listen to me in earnest, worship Allah, fast during the month of Ramadan, and give your wealth in Zakat. Perform Hajj if you can afford to. You know that every Muslim is the brother of another Muslim. You are all equal. Nobody has superiority over another except by piety and good action.

Remember, one day you will appear before Allah and answer for your deeds. So beware, do not stray from the path of righteousness after I am gone.

O People, no prophet or apostle will come after me and no new faith will be born. Reason well, therefore, O people, and understand my words, which I convey to you. Verily, I leave amidst you two weighty things, the Book of Allah (the Qur'an) and my kindered, Ahlul Bayt. If you hold fast to these two, never will you go astray: never will these two be separated from each other until they both return unto me at the Cistern (Haudh-e-Kauther).

All those who listen to me shall pass on my words to others and those to others again; and may the last ones understand my words better than those who listen to me directly. Be my witness O Allah, that I have conveyed Your message to Your people."